

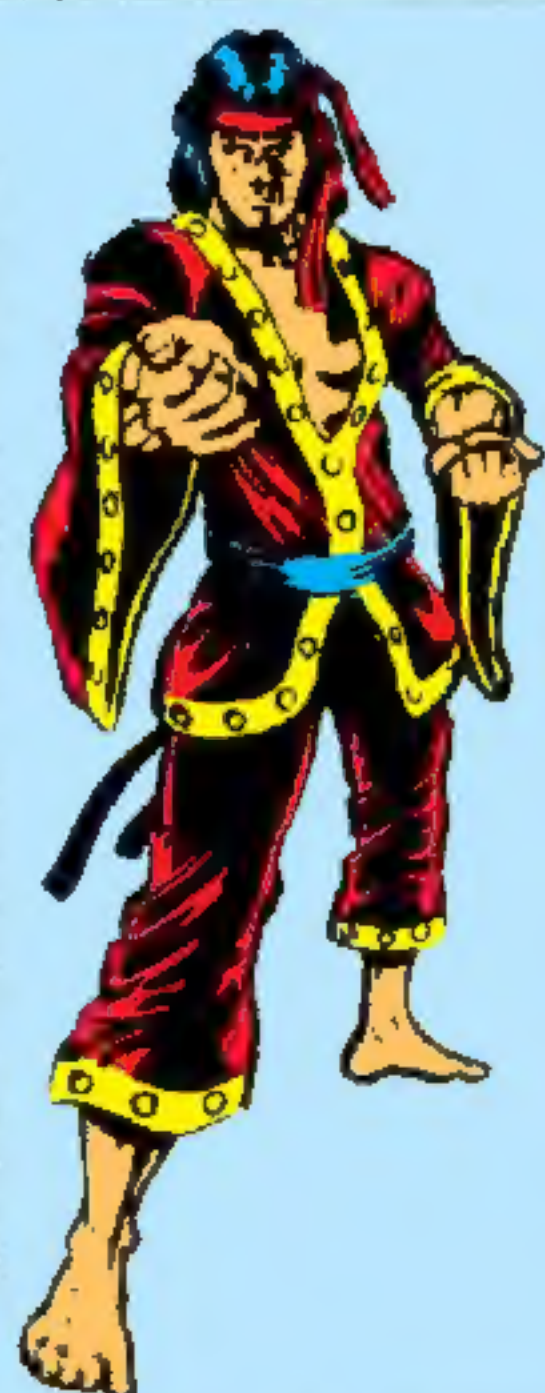
MASTER OF
KUNG FU

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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU

TM

SHANG-CHI
RACES AGAINST
TIME TO TRACK
DOWN THE
MOST SINISTER
SECRET OF
ALL!



THE
AGES
OF
DEATH!

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my **father** did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to **honor** him would bring nothing but **dishonor** to the spirit of my **name**.

Stan Lee PRESENTS: MASTER OF KUNG FU!™

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

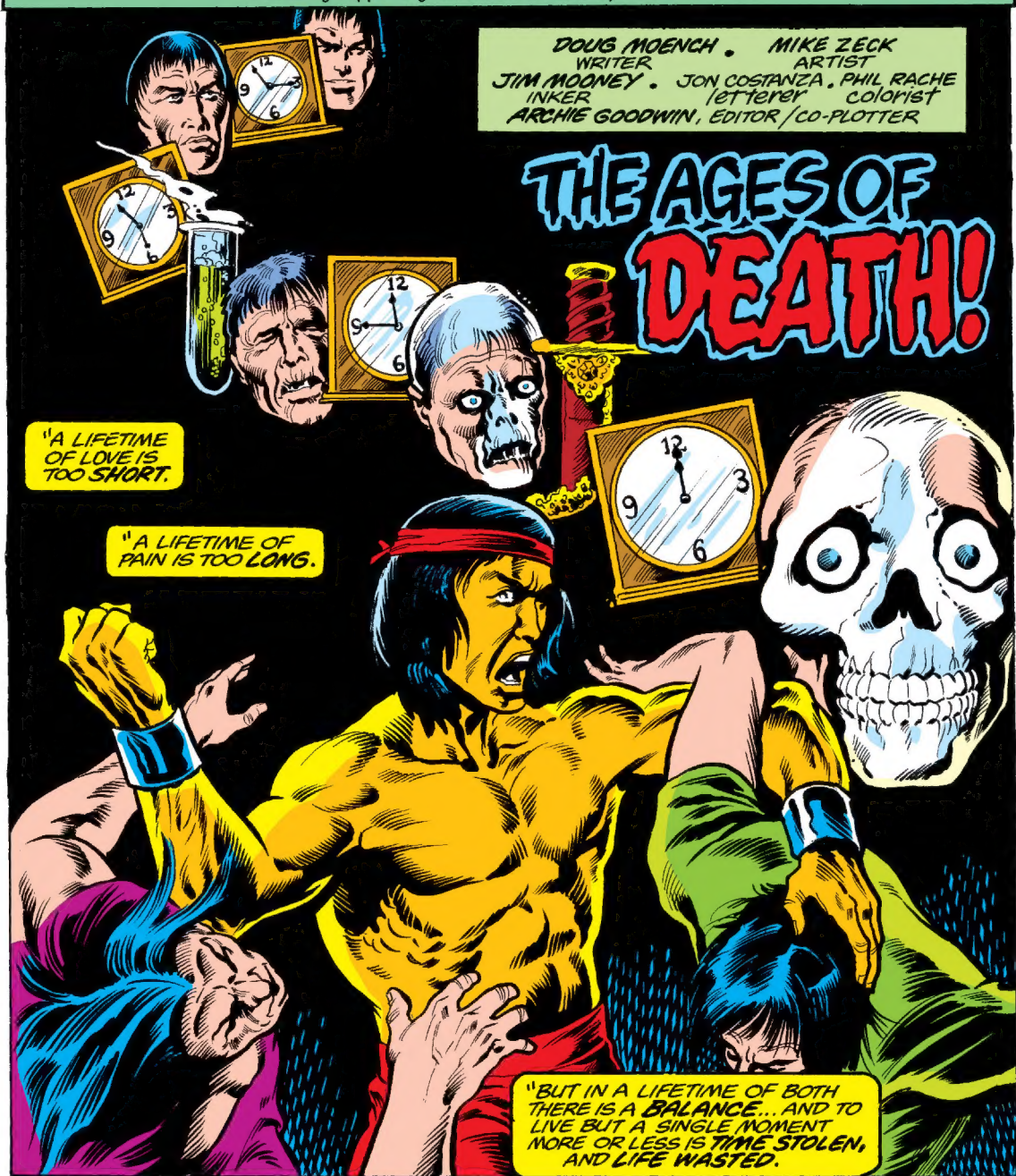
DOUG MOENCH • MIKE ZECK
WRITER ARTIST
JIM MOONEY • JON COSTANZA • PHIL RACHE
INKER LETTERER COLORIST
ARCHIE GOODWIN, EDITOR/CO-PLOTTER

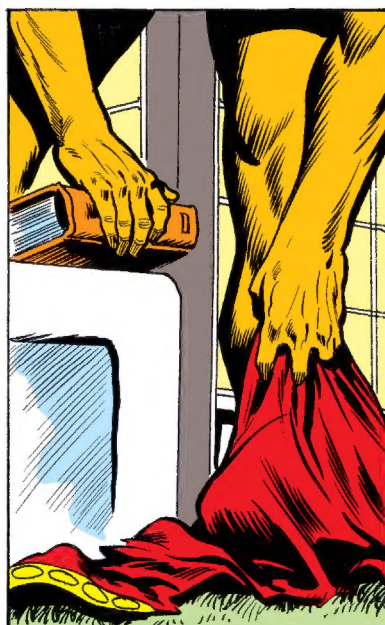
THE AGES OF DEATH!

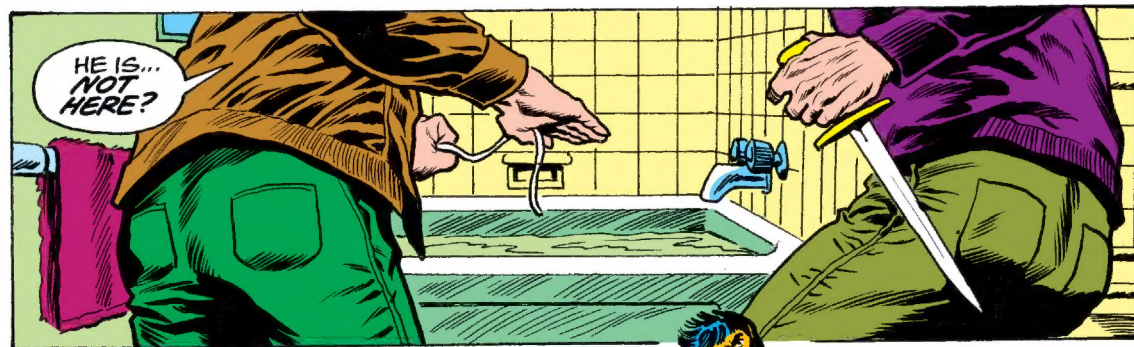
"A LIFETIME
OF LOVE IS
TOO SHORT.

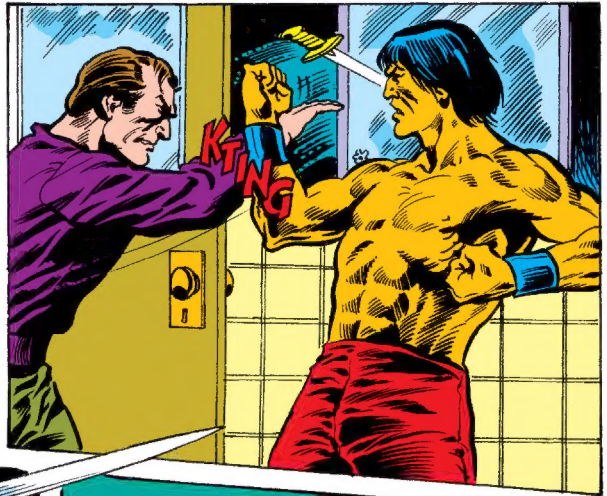
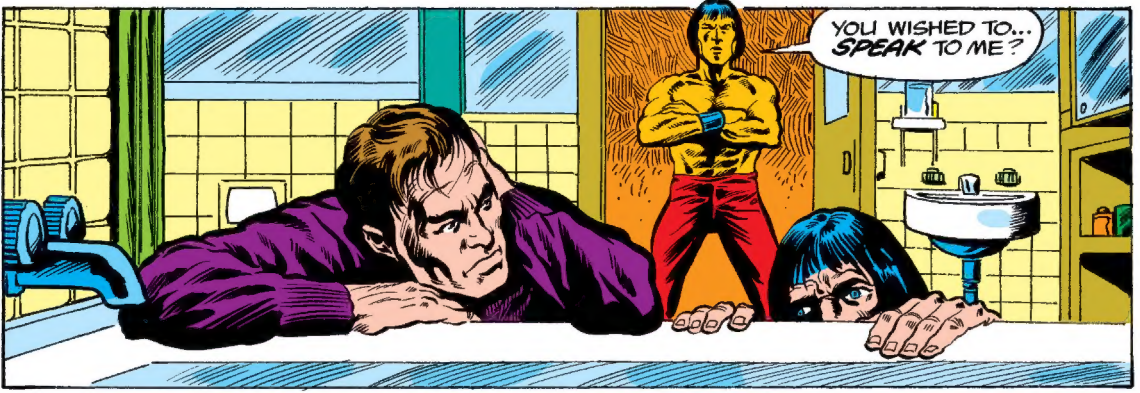
"A LIFETIME OF
PAIN IS TOO LONG.

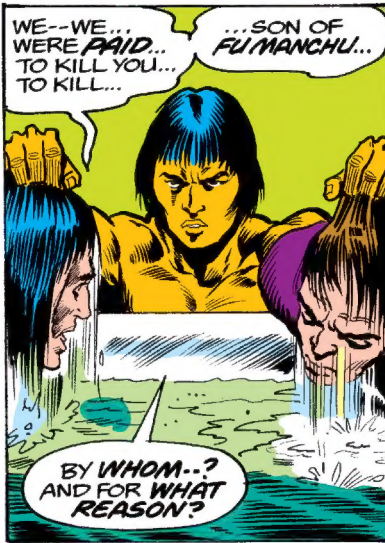
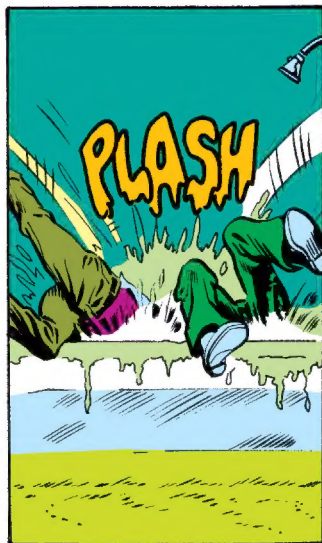
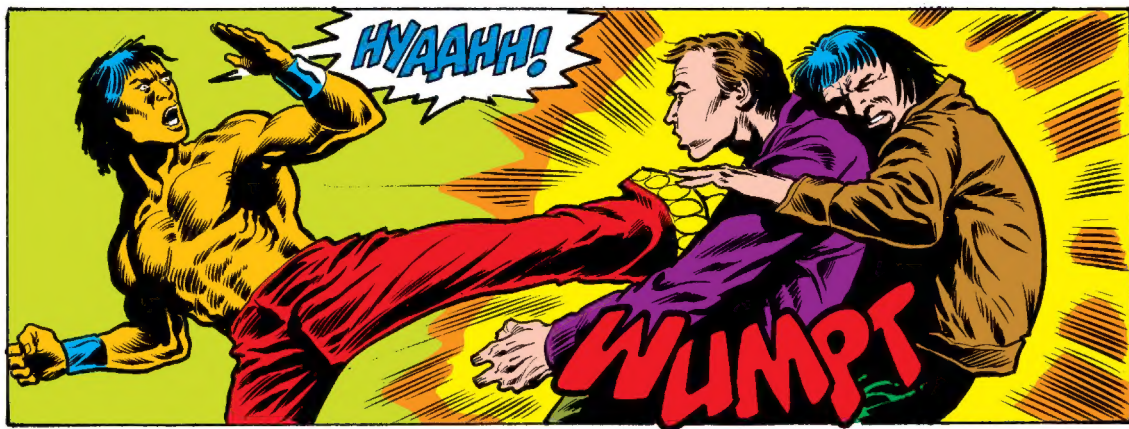
"BUT IN A LIFETIME OF BOTH
THERE IS A **BALANCE**... AND TO
LIVE BUT A SINGLE MOMENT
MORE OR LESS IS **TIME STOLEN**,
AND LIFE WASTED.





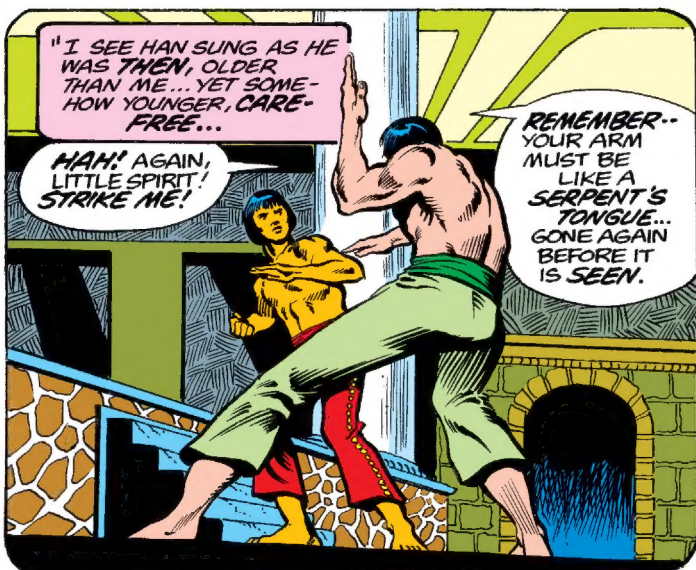








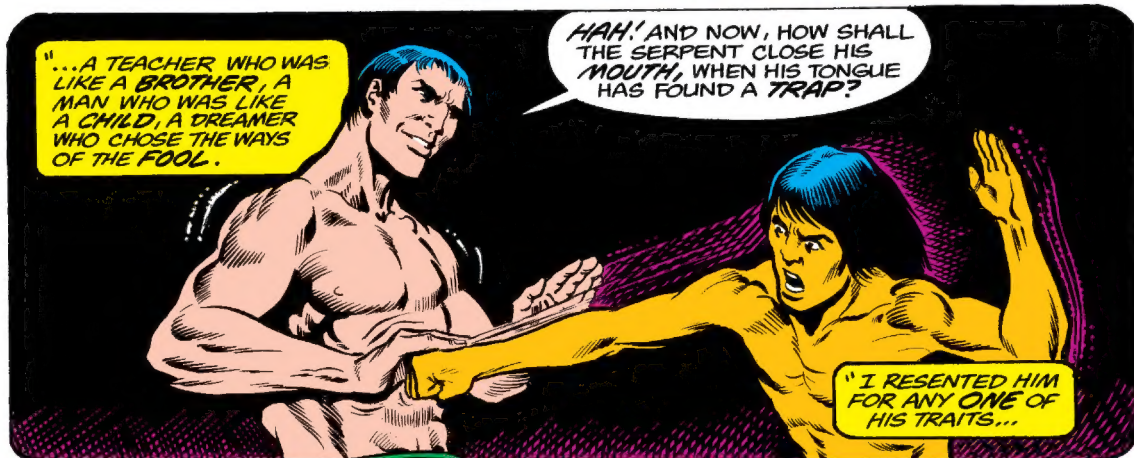
"HE RETURNED TO MY FATHER'S **FORTRESS**... AND FULFILLED HIS LONG-AGO **YOW**...



"I SEE HAN SUNG AS HE WAS **THEN**, OLDER THAN ME... YET SOMEHOW YOUNGER, CARE-FREE...

HAH! AGAIN, LITTLE SPIRIT! STRIKE ME!

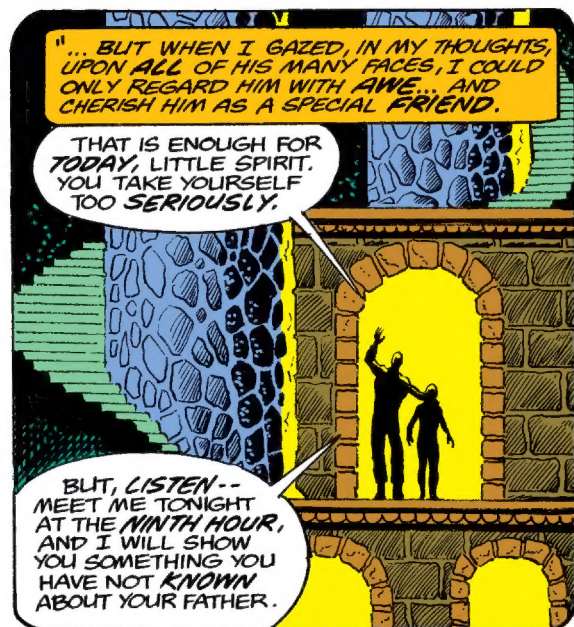
REMEMBER-- YOUR ARM MUST BE LIKE A **SERPENT'S TONGUE**... GONE AGAIN BEFORE IT IS SEEN.



"...A TEACHER WHO WAS LIKE A **BROTHER**, A MAN WHO WAS LIKE A **CHILD**, A DREAMER WHO CHOSE THE WAYS OF THE **FOOL**.

HAH! AND NOW, HOW SHALL THE SERPENT CLOSE HIS **MOUTH**, WHEN HIS TONGUE HAS FOUND A **TRAP**?

"I RESENTED HIM FOR ANY **ONE** OF HIS TRAITS...



"... BUT WHEN I GAZED, IN MY THOUGHTS, UPON **ALL** OF HIS MANY FACES, I COULD ONLY REGARD HIM WITH **AWE**... AND CHERISH HIM AS A SPECIAL **FRIEND**.

THAT IS ENOUGH FOR **TODAY**, LITTLE SPIRIT. YOU TAKE YOURSELF TOO **SERIOUSLY**.

BUT, **LISTEN**-- MEET ME TONIGHT AT THE **NINTH HOUR**, AND I WILL SHOW YOU SOMETHING YOU HAVE NOT **KNOWN** ABOUT YOUR FATHER.



"THE RESENTMENT REQUIRED **ISOLATION** OF THOSE CURIOUS FRAGMENTS WHICH FORMED HIM.

"BUT HAN SUNG WAS A MAN NOT EASILY **BROKEN**, WHOSE STRANGE GUISES WERE DIFFICULT TO **ISOLATE**. THE FRAGMENTS, THOUGH NONE MATCHED, ALL **INTERLOCKED**--LIKE A BEADED NECKLACE STRUNG BY ONE OF MY FATHER'S TRAINED **MONKEYS**.

"AND SO I MET HAN SLING IN STEALTH AT THE APPOINTED HOUR.

"FROM THE SHADOWS, HE SHOWED ME TEETH SAVORING DANGER..."



"... AND HE TOOK ME TO A DARK AND NARROW PLACE IN WHICH WE CRAWLED, AS IF SQUIRMING THROUGH THE BELLY OF AN OMINOUS SECRET.



"HE STOPPED, AND HIS FACES FELL AWAY ONE BY ONE, UNTIL HIS ENTIRE BEING WAS NOTHING BUT PLAYFUL EXCITEMENT.

YES! WE ARE JUST IN TIME. HE IS STARTING.



"I RESENTED HIM FOR THAT MOMENT. IT WAS NOT RIGHT FOR A MAN TO BE SO... CHILDLIKE.

LOOK, LITTLE SPIRIT, AND SEE WHY YOUR FATHER IS AS OLD AS THE WIND IN THE TREES, YET AS YOUNG AS THE SPRING BUDS.



"MY NOSE TOUCHED THE COLD STONE, AND I GASPED AT THE SUD-DEN SHOCK.

"SOMEHOW, WE WERE ABOVE MY FATHER'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS. I FELT A WAVE OF EVIL OVER ME. I WAS SPYING ON MY FATHER. THEN I UNDERSTOOD HAN SLING'S EXCITEMENT.



"HIS VOICE HISSED INTO MY EAR: 'DO YOU SEE HIM, LITTLE SPIRIT? HE IS MIXING HIS ELIXIR VITAE.



"IT IS A SERUM OF IMMORTALITY, LITTLE SPIRIT. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?

"IT MEANS... HE WILL LIVE FOREVER."

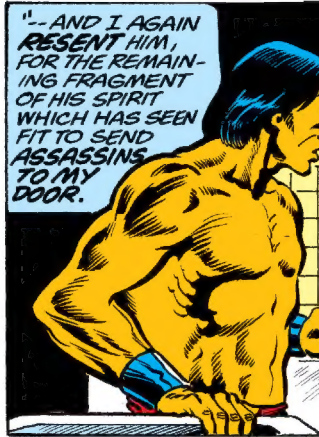


IMAGINE, LITTLE SPIRIT, WITH SUCH A SERUM... ONE WOULD NEVER DIE.

THAT IS WHY... SOMEDAY, I WILL HAVE SOME OF FU MANCHU'S SERUM FOR MYSELF.



"AND NOW, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, HAN SUNG HAS FULFILLED HIS VOW. BUT IN SO DOING, HE HAS LOST ALL THE FACES I ONCE CHERISHED--



"--AND I AGAIN RESENT HIM, FOR THE REMAINING FRAGMENT OF HIS SPIRIT WHICH HAS SEEN FIT TO SEND ASSASSINS TO MY DOOR.



HAN SUNG IS A FOOL. I AM NO LONGER MY FATHER'S AGENT. WHERE IS HE NOW?

HE IS HERE IN LONDON, TRYING TO FIND HIS DAUGHTER.

TOGETHER, THEY HOPE TO ESCAPE. DON'T KNOW WHERE--



WHERE IS HAN SUNG... NOW?

I-I DON'T KNOW. WE WERE TO MEET HIM AT THE LIME-HOUSE-- NINE O'CLOCK TONIGHT-- FOR THE REST OF OUR PAYMENT...



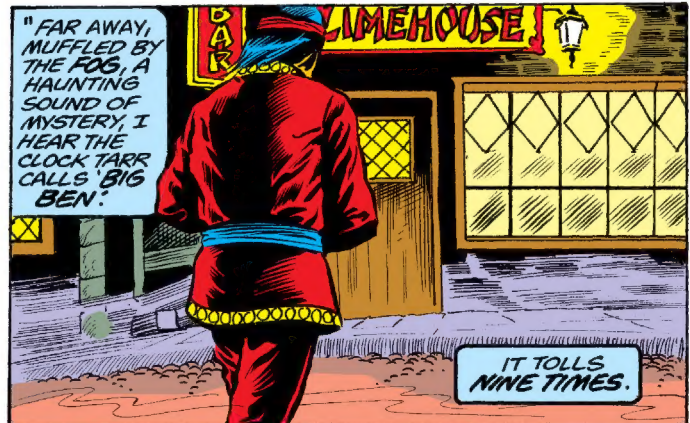
--WILL FIND THEM AT THE SAVOY HOTEL. ROOM SIX-TWENTY-THREE.

NO, I WILL NOT BE HERE.



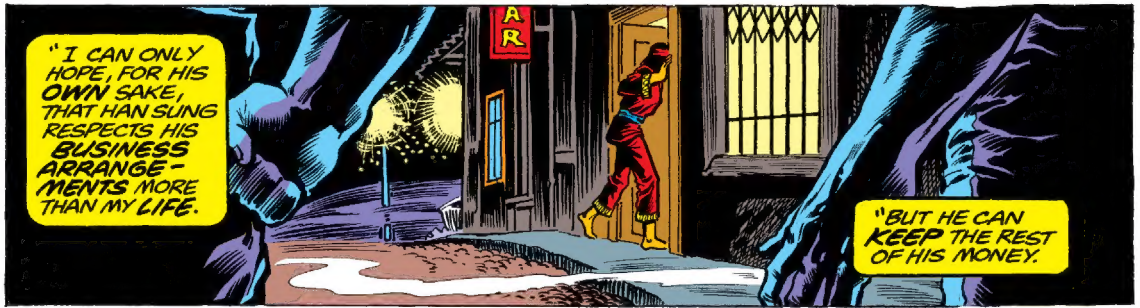
"I HAVE SPENT THE DAY SEARCHING FOR HAN SUNG.

"IT WAS WASTED TIME."



"FAR AWAY, MUFFLED BY THE FOG, A HAUNTING SOUND OF MYSTERY, I HEAR THE CLOCK TARR CALLS 'BIG BEN'."

IT TOLLS NINE TIMES.



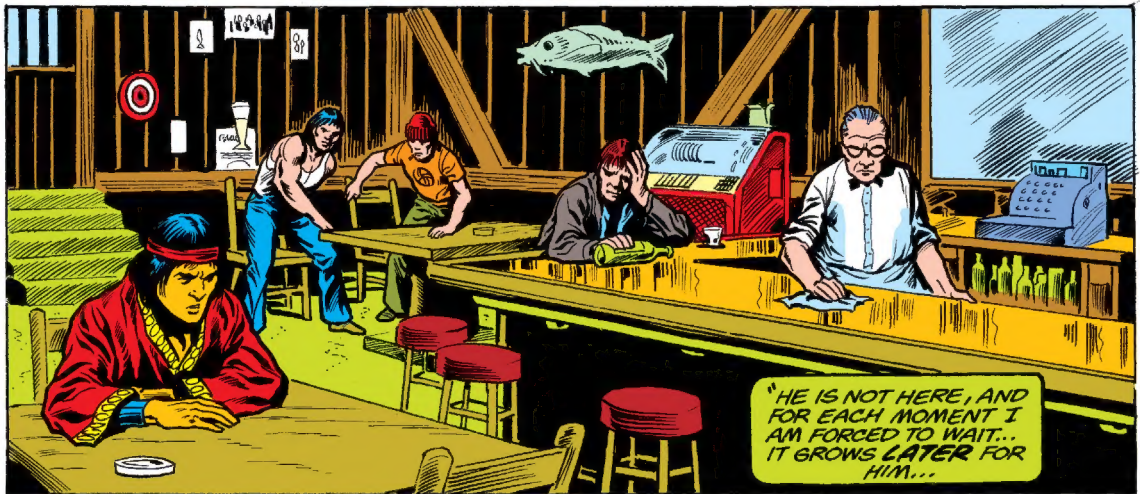
"I CAN ONLY HOPE, FOR HIS OWN SAKE, THAT HAN SUNG RESPECTS HIS BUSINESS ARRANGEMENTS MORE THAN MY LIFE."

"BUT HE CAN KEEP THE REST OF HIS MONEY."

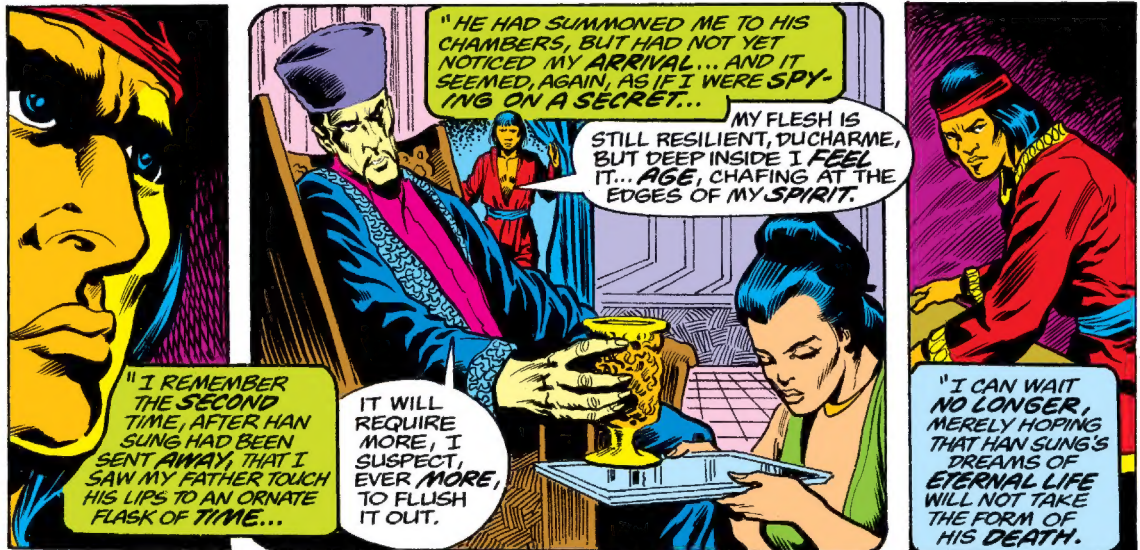


IT WAS HIM.

YES... THEY FAILED THIS MORNING.



"HE IS NOT HERE, AND FOR EACH MOMENT I AM FORCED TO WAIT... IT GROWS LATER FOR HIM..."



"HE HAD SUMMONED ME TO HIS CHAMBERS, BUT HAD NOT YET NOTICED MY ARRIVAL... AND IT SEEMED, AGAIN, AS IF I WERE SPYING ON A SECRET..."

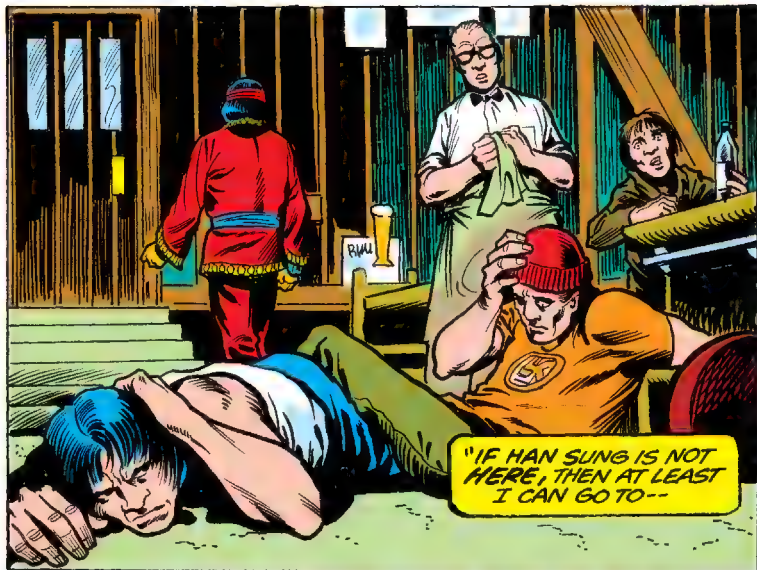
MY FLESH IS STILL RESILIENT, DUCHARME, BUT DEEP INSIDE I FEEL IT... AGE, CHAFING AT THE EDGES OF MY SPIRIT.

"I REMEMBER THE SECOND TIME, AFTER HAN SUNG HAD BEEN SENT AWAY, THAT I SAW MY FATHER TOUCH HIS LIPS TO AN ORNATE FLASK OF TIME..."

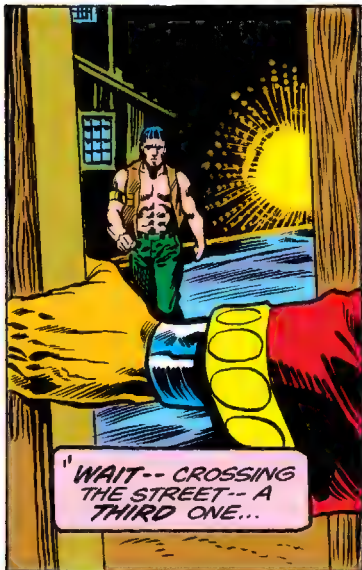
IT WILL REQUIRE MORE, I SUSPECT, EVER MORE, TO FLUSH IT OUT.

"I CAN WAIT NO LONGER, MERELY HOPING THAT HAN SUNG'S DREAMS OF ETERNAL LIFE WILL NOT TAKE THE FORM OF HIS DEATH."





"IF HAN SUNG IS NOT
HERE, THEN AT LEAST
I CAN GO TO--



"WAIT-- CROSSING
THE STREET-- A
THIRD ONE...



"PERHAPS
THROUGH
THE REAR
EXIT..."

NO! COME
BACK--YOU CAN'T
GO BACK THERE--
PLEASE!



"A CURTAIN OF GLASS
BEADS, STRUNG BY
A CALCULATING
ARTISAN, CONTRIVED
FOR ATMOSPHERE
...THE SLOW PASSAGE
OF LAZULI SMOKE..."

"PERHAPS
I WAS
WRONG..."



"PERHAPS IT IS
HERE, BEHIND A
DIFFERENT FACE
OF LIMEHOUSE,
THAT I WILL FIND..."



--HAN SUNG??

YES,
LITTLE
SPIRIT...



...IT IS YOUR
TEACHER...
YOUR FRIEND...
IT IS HAN
SUNG, WHO
HAS ALWAYS
SURPASSED YOU
IN AGE... BUT
WHO NOW LOOKS
INTO THE MIRROR
TO SEE A STOLEN
LIFETIME...

LOOK UPON MY FACE,
LITTLE SPIRIT, AND
TRACE ALONG ITS
WRINKLES THE COMPLEX
STORY OF WHY I STOLE
YOUR FATHER'S ELIXIR
VITAE...



BUT...HOW...?
YOU WERE STILL...
YOUNG...WHEN
MY FATHER SENT
YOU AWAY TO--

SENT ME AWAY?
IS THAT WHAT HE
TOLD YOU? FU
MANCHU SENT ME
NOWHERE,
SHANG-CHI,
SAVE TO A CAGE
IN HIS ABOMIN-
ABLE LABORATORY
... AND TO AN AGONY
OF PASSING TIME
WHICH DID NOT
EXIST...

YOUR FATHER
STOLE MY
YOUTH, SHANG-
CHI... HE SHAT-
TERED MY
MANY FACES,
LITTLE SPIRIT...

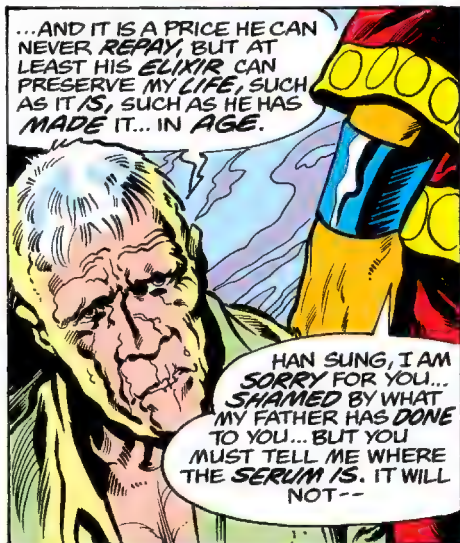


HE CALLED IT A BIO-
LOGICAL EXPERIMENT
-- RESEARCH INTO THE
MYSTERIES OF RE-
JUVENATION-- IN
PREPARATION FOR THE
"ADVENT OF HIS
NEW SON"...

"THEN... MY FATHER
HAD PLANNED
SHAKA KHARN'S
RESURRECTION...
FOR ALMOST A
DECADE.



HE SELECTED ME
FOR THE IRONY OF
THE CHOICE. HE KNEW
OF MY INTEREST IN
HIS SERUM, AND SO
HE AGED ME BEYOND
MY YEARS. HE OWES
ME MY YOUTH, MY
FACES...



...AND IT IS A PRICE HE CAN
NEVER REPAY, BUT AT
LEAST HIS ELIXIR CAN
PRESERVE MY LIFE, SUCH
AS IT IS, SUCH AS HE HAS
MADE IT... IN AGE.

HAN SUNG, I AM
SORRY FOR YOU...
SHAMED BY WHAT
MY FATHER HAS DONE
TO YOU... BUT YOU
MUST TELL ME WHERE
THE SERUM IS. IT WILL
NOT--



NO, SHANG-
CHI, THE
ELIXIR VITAE
IS HIDDEN--
WHERE ONLY I
MAY FIND IT.
YOU SEE, FU MAN-
CHU'S SI-FAN
HAVE PURSUED ME
FOR OVER A YEAR,
THROUGH HONG KONG,
INDIA... AND NOW YOU
TAKE UP THE CHASE
HERE.

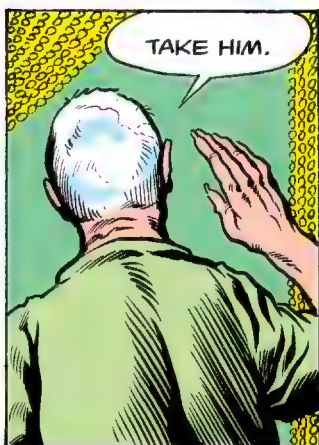
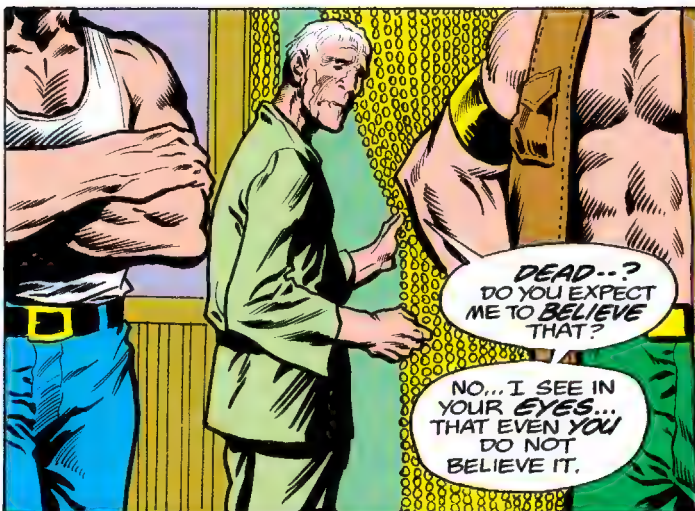
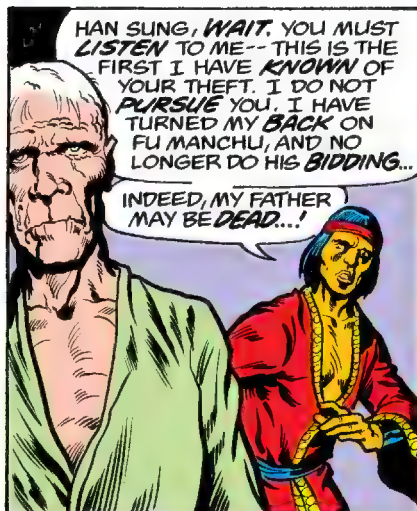
BUT THEY COULD NOT CATCH ME OR
FIND THE ELIXIR, NOR SHALL YOU. FU
MANCHU IS EVIL TO HOARD IMMORTALITY
FOR HIMSELF--HE MUST BE FORCED TO SHARE
IT, AT LEAST WITH ME.



HAN SUNG,
MY FATHER
HAS SPOKEN
TO ME ON THE
EFFECTS OF IMMOR-
TALITY, SUGGESTING
THERE IS A HIDDEN
SIDE TO IT. PERHAPS
HIS ONE TRULY NOBLE
ACT IN LIFE... HAS
BEEN IN REFUSING
TO SHARE IT.

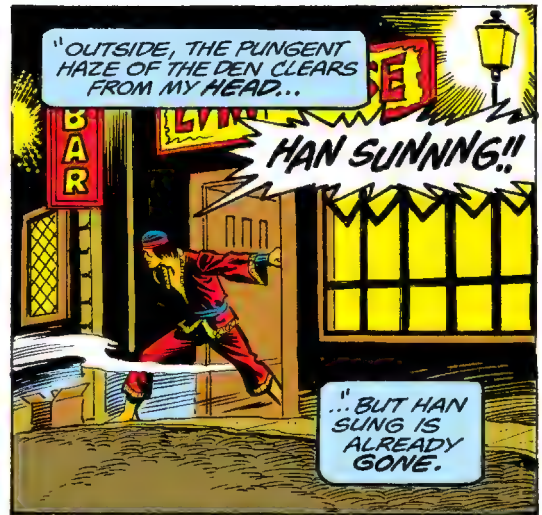


PERHAPS,
LITTLE SPIRIT...
BUT I SHALL BE
THE JUDGE OF
THAT. IT IS MY
RIGHT.





THERE IS NO
TIME TO
FIGHT!



"OUTSIDE, THE PLUNGING
HAZE OF THE DEN CLEARS
FROM MY HEAD..."

HAN SUNNING!!

"... BUT HAN
SUNG IS
ALREADY
GONE."



"BUT THERE
IS YET ONE
CHANCE... ONE
PLACE TO TRY."



"HE DOES NOT KNOW
I HAVE LEARNED
OF IT..."



YOU ARE HAN
SUNG'S DAUGHTER
AND I WILL NOT
BELIEVE YOUR
DENIALS-- SO DON'T
WASTE TIME.

YOU MUST
BELIEVE THAT I
WISH ONLY TO
HELP YOUR

FATHER, AND THAT I
AM NOT A MEMBER OF THE
SI-FAN-- NOR DO I SERVE
FU MANCHU IN ANY WAY.



PLEASE. THE
ELIXIR COULD
HURT HIM-- YOU
MUST BELIEVE
THAT. HAN SUNG
WOULD NOT
LISTEN TO ME,
BUT IT IS THE
TRUTH.

JUST TELL
ME-- PERHAPS
TO SAVE HIS
LIFE-- TELL ME
WHERE HE HAS
HIDDEN THE
SERUM, SO I
MAY DESTROY IT.



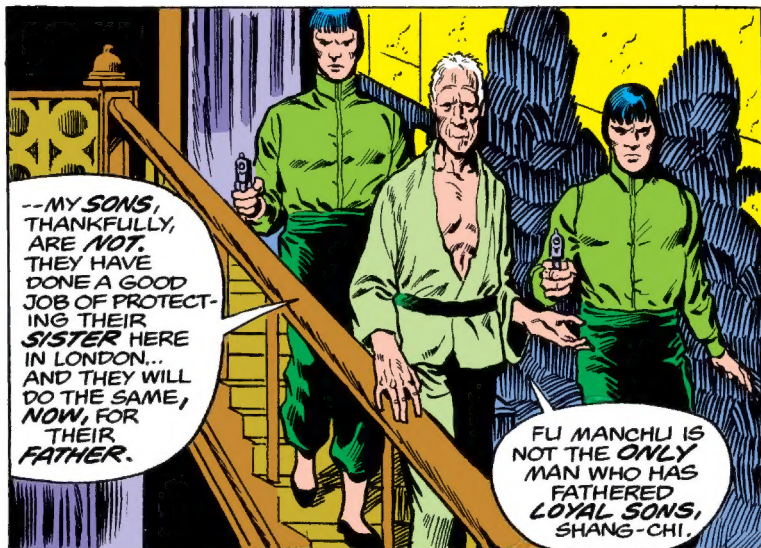
WELL, I... I
DON'T KNOW--
DON'T KNOW
YOU. WHAT
IF...?

PLEASE--
WE MUST
PROTECT HIM,
TOGETHER,
FROM HIS
OWN FEARS!

"SHE IS ALMOST
CONVINCED,
WISHING TO
BELIEVE ME,
PERHAPS
BECAUSE SHE
ALREADY
FEARS THE
ELIXIR
HERSELF..."

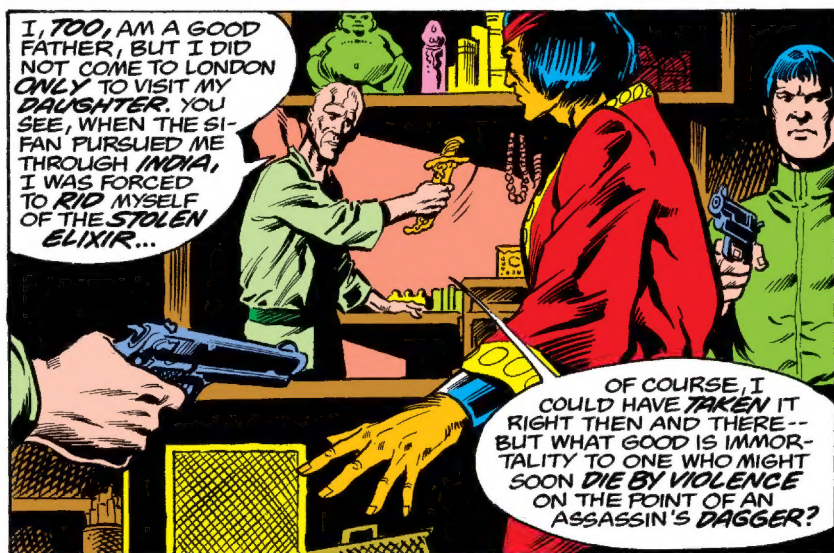


YOU ARE **TOO LATE**, LITTLE SPIRIT. YOU SEE, WHILE MY DAUGHTER IS **GULLIBLE** AND GIVEN TO **WORRY**--



--MY **SONS**, THANKFULLY, ARE **NOT**. THEY HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB OF **PROTECTING** THEIR **SISTER** HERE IN LONDON... AND THEY WILL DO THE SAME, **NOW**, FOR THEIR **FATHER**.

FU MANCHU IS NOT THE **ONLY** MAN WHO HAS FATHERED **LOYAL SONS**, SHANG-CHI.



I, **TOO**, AM A GOOD FATHER, BUT I DID NOT COME TO LONDON **ONLY** TO VISIT MY **DAUGHTER**. YOU SEE, WHEN THE SI-FAN PURSUED ME THROUGH **INDIA**, I WAS FORCED TO **RID** MYSELF OF THE **STOLEN ELIXIR**...

OF COURSE, I COULD HAVE **TAKEN** IT RIGHT THEN AND THERE-- BUT WHAT GOOD IS IMMORTALITY TO ONE WHO MIGHT SOON **DIE BY VIOLENCE** ON THE POINT OF AN ASSASSIN'S **DAGGER**?



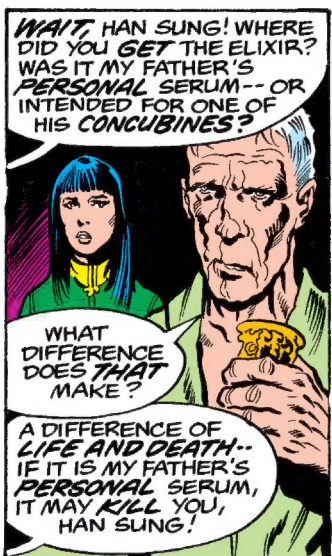
NO, I DECIDED I WOULD NOT **TAKE** THE ELIXIR UNTIL I WAS REASONABLY CERTAIN IT WOULD NOT BE **WASTED**--UNTIL I WAS **SAFE**. AND SO, FROM **INDIA**, I SENT IT **HERE**.

HAD I BEEN **SLAIN**, THEN AT LEAST MY DAUGHTER AND MY SONS WOULD HAVE **BENEFITTED** FROM IT.



BUT NOW, I AM GOING TO TAKE IT, SHANG-CHI, RIGHT BEFORE YOUR **EYES**... WHILE YOU ARE HELPLESS TO **STOP** ME.

YOU SEE, WHILE I AM CERTAIN YOU WISH TO **STOP** ME, I DO **NOT** BELIEVE YOUR SPIRIT WILL ALLOW YOU TO **SLAY** ME ONCE YOU HAVE **FAILED**.



WAIT, HAN SUNG! WHERE DID YOU **GET** THE ELIXIR? WAS IT MY FATHER'S **PERSONAL** SERUM-- OR INTENDED FOR ONE OF HIS **CONCUBINES**?

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES **THAT** MAKE?

A DIFFERENCE OF **LIFE AND DEATH**-- IF IT IS MY FATHER'S **PERSONAL** SERUM, IT MAY **KILL** YOU, HAN SUNG!



NICE... **TRY**, LITTLE SPIRIT.





"IT IS WHAT I FEARED. HE WILL HAVE A CHANCE NOW, TO STOP --AND DRINK IT...!"

YOU CANNOT STOP ME NOW, SHANG-CHI! I WILL LIVE FOREVER!!



DO YOU HEAR--?! FOREVER!!

NOOOOOO



"THE THIRD TIME I SAW MY FATHER... AND HIS VILE SERUM..."

THAT IS MINE! DUCHARME! I HAVE TOLD YOU NEVER TO TAKE THE VITAE WITHOUT ASKING ME!

WE MUST USE DIFFERENT SERUMS NOW.



NO, HAN SUNG--

NOOOO!!



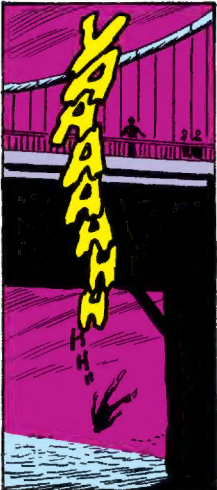
MY SYSTEM HAS DEVELOPED A TOLERANCE OF THE ELIXIR-- AN IMMUNITY-- THROUGH PRO- LONGED USE, REQUIRING AN EVER INCREASED DOSAGE.

SHOULD ANYONE ELSE ADMINISTER MY MIXTURE--



"--THE RESULT WOULD BE DEATH."

A-AAAGH-KK



FATHER--! YOU... YOU KILLED HIM!



NO... HIS OWN FEAR OF DEATH... KILLED HIM.

"HAN SUNG'S WEAKNESS WAS ALWAYS HIS RELIANCE ON A SINGLE FACE, A SINGLE MIND. I RESENT HIM FOR THAT. I RESENT THE TIME HE HAS STOLEN... FROM HIMSELF."

NEXT ISSUE: **WAR-YORE, PART II!**

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

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Pause for a heavy sigh of amazement, followed by warmly glowing radiations of inner satisfaction, then a wistfully thankful gosh-wow feeling of gratification, all garnished with a great big grin.

The mail on our recently completed six (eight? ten?) part Fu Manchu opus has started to flood in, People—with a voluminous vengeance! It feels like *tons* of it, and we couldn't be buried under anything better. There are easily more than a thousand letters here, almost literally unanimous in hyperbole-busting praise. (The single negative letter received thus far is from a Sax Rohmer purist who disagrees with some of the "license" we've taken regarding previously established characters, and comments not at all on Shang-Chi or the series in and of its own merits.) We wish we could print all the letters, obviously cannot, and therefore extend our sincere thanks to each and every one of you who took the time and trouble to write; small consolation, true, but extended with the very best intentions available...

So what are we gonna do now—rest on our pooped-out laurels? Nah; we're gonna start printing some of those letters...

Friends,

I am exhausted. Not just physically and mentally, but *emotionally* exhausted as well. I have in front of me the greatest continuing comic story ever produced. Now: Where do I go from *here*? What can I say that will in any way reward your success without making you overbearingly proud? For the last six months I have laughed, cried, shuddered, been excited and calmed, stupefied and even humbled—all due to your masterpiece called MASTER OF KUNG FU.

Doug, you must feel immense satisfaction when you look back on the work you've done in the past few years. I suppose you might even be guilty of feeling pride, but, if so, your pride is both justified and understandable. I only hope that some day you can equal and even surpass the grandeur you've created in MOKF thus far. I don't think I will ever see, hear, read, or *feel* a greater story than the one you've just given me. I no longer *read* your dialogue; I *hear it spoken*. Here I find a fluid, continuously evolving storyline with no missteps or unnecessary actions. I love it.

Paul, never before have I seen an artist mature with such grace and in so little time. Never have I seen such realism in facial expressions, or such intense dynamics in body actions. Your work is greatly appreciated.

As far as I'm concerned, Marvel has four Shazam Awards in the bag—Best Writer (Doug Moench); Best Artist (Paul Gulacy); Best Continuing Comic (MOKF); and Best Story (any issue of MOKF).

Matthew Nelson
1729 Ashton Avenue
Sharpsville, PA 16150

Dear Doug and Paul,

So it finally comes to an end, as all things must. I'll save my words on the overview until next issue's epilog, but the two words which spring to mind on this half-a-hundredth issue of MASTER OF KUNG FU are "well done." From the fine Dave Cockrum cover to the last fading shot of earth, the script and artwork sparkled.

Allow me to pause and play "thinking man" for a moment. Fu Manchu meant it, after all: His "ages-old evil" hid a man of ideals, foreign to most in the truest sense of that much-abused word. The reactions of a grandiose man to dangers which many of us fail to perceive are in themselves grandiose, and if Fu Manchu feels he must blow up the moon to open the eyes of those fragments of mankind who will survive...well, so far nothing *less* than that has accomplished the task.

Pragmatism is idealism, in a way; if one's ideal is to maintain the status quo, survival of mankind, then they are interchangeable. So Fu Manchu has his dream, and ultimately it destroys him (for now); but it is the Smiths and Restons who win, because they are the smaller dreamers. And in the middle, the thinker who hides from his dreams: Shang-Chi.

But before I take off on a soapbox, I repeat, to Paul and Doug (as well as Mike, John, Jan, and Archie): Well done.

Roger Klorese
9415 NW 72nd Street
Tamarac, FL 33321

Dear Archie,

I never read the letters pages in MASTER OF KUNG FU anymore. They're all the same: "Magnificent, great, artistic, creative, flawless, beautiful, etc. etc. etc." So why not use the space for something more interesting?

But the thing is...all those things people say in the letters pages are true (issue #50 being no exception)! So I might as well add my own 2¢ worth. MOKF is, in my opinion, *the best* comic on the shelves—and has been, ever since Moench and Gulacy started their collaboration. No ifs, ands, buts, or maybes!

(Now I can start reading the letters pages again to see if you print this...)

J. Doug Dennis
11444 Clark
Davisburg, MI 48019

In conclusion, we'd like to pass along the following quotation forwarded by Bill Wringe of Sandringham, Australia...

"A martial art is not a means of felling an opponent by force or by lethal instruments. Neither is it intended to lead the world to destruction by arms and other illegitimate means. A true martial art calls for bringing the inner energy of the universe to order, protecting the peace of the world and molding, as well as preserving, everything in nature in its right form."

--Morihei Uyeshiba

